

## **Announcement of the National Defense Service Medal**

The Department of Defense announced that servicemembers on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible to receive the National Defense Service Medal. The National Defense Service Medal may also be awarded to members of the Reserve components who are ordered to federal active duty, regardless of duration, except for certain categories. While no closing date has been established, eligible servicemembers can receive the award immediately. The National Defense Service Medal was first established by President Eisenhower in 1953, and was subsequently awarded for honorable active service for any period between June 27, 1950 and July 27, 1954, between Jan. 1, 1961 and Aug. 14, 1974, and between Aug. 2, 1990 and Nov. 30, 1995. Individuals can purchase the National Defense Service Medal at the clothing sales store.

## **Forwarding AKO Accounts to Civilian E-mail**

Using an Army Knowledge Online e-mail address doesn't mean soldiers must surrender their current military or commercial e-mail accounts. With AKO forwarding rule, e-mails from "us.army.mil" addresses can be automatically forwarded to any other e-mail address a user selects. Users can do this by clicking on the "personalize" button after they log on, and then choosing "user profile." AKO officials set up the forwarding rule because they said they realized most AKO e-mail accounts compliment, rather than replace, soldiers' local post and AOL or Hotmail-type accounts. Soldiers move around so often it is a significant advantage for them to have one e-mail address that does not change as they move from post to post or from mission to mission. Having an "us.army.mil" email address should make it much easier for soldiers' buddies, families and colleagues to remember than the typical installation e-mail address string. Gaining access to AKO accounts from any Internet terminal in the world can assist soldiers with maintaining communication at times when they are in-between assignments or in jobs that don't provide regular Internet access.

## **Good-Bye OMPF**

The Army is saying good-bye to an old mainstay. After years of service, the microfiche system used by personnel units and soldiers to keep tabs on their careers is going away. The online Official Military Personnel File will completely replace the old microfiche system by next year. This will be done in phases, with the first phase commencing soon to stop sending the OMPF microfiche to soldiers in the field. The OMPF for every soldier is currently online on a test-run basis. By June 1, those records will be available for access, but to do so, soldiers must possess an Army Knowledge On-Line (AKO) account and password. The old microfiche readers will become turn-in equipment. This turn in has been compared to trading-in is a horse-and-buggy and getting a brand new Chevy. Replacing the old microfiche system with an online system is monumental and empowers the soldier to have greater participation in career management. Under the old system, soldiers had to write letters requesting a microfiche copy of their records. Soldiers then had to wait four to six weeks for the microfiche to come in the mail. Then you had to find a microfiche reader that can be a difficult task. With the online system, soldiers can log onto their Army Knowledge Online account and view their records to make sure everything is correct and complete. If a document is missing, all the soldier needs to do is take a copy of the document to one of 30 digital centers and have the document verified and scanned in for addition to the record. It allows soldiers to update records in a day or two. Promotion boards will also access soldiers' files via the online system. When soldiers pull up their records, they're only looking at a mirror image of the actual files. The actual file is tucked away safely behind several computer firewalls in a database.

## **Change in NCOER Processing Procedures**

Starting with all NCOERs ending in March 2002 and later, the report must include the Army Knowledge On-line (AKO) e-mail address of the rated NCO and the rating officials when the rating officials are Army. The email address for the rated NCO will be entered on the same line as the rated NCO's names on the backside of the report. The NCO's name will be in ALL CAPS—for example, SMITH, JOHN S. Move four spaces over and type the NCO's AKO email address—i.e. john.s.doe@. Since the last portion of all AKO e-mail addresses are the same, the only portion to be entered on the NCOER is the portion up to the @ sign. The email addresses for all three rating officials will be entered on the last line of part IIIId (areas of special emphasis). The data will be entered in the following manner: RATER: andrew.crocodile@ S/R: bobby.meddler@ Rev: daryl.seeme@. An e-mail address with the senior rater as a civilian or another branch of service, will be annotated as follows: RATER: joe. blow@ S/R: jane.doe@bragg.army.mil Rev: john.d.smith@). Only one space is necessary between addresses. The purpose of this change is to allow the Enlisted Records and Evaluation Center (EREC) to contact the NCO and rating officials when there is a "gap" in the reporting period. A gap in reporting period is when the "from" date of the report received is not the month after the "through" date of the last report on file. The e-mail message will inform the rated NCO and rating officials that there is a discrepancy in the report period. If no response is received within 30 days, a second e-mail will be sent to the installation CSM. If it is not resolved within 30 days after the 2d email notification, the "gap" will be declared non-rated time on the rated NCO's record and EREC will make no further attempts to resolve the discrepancy.